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AIR POWER IN THE CARIBBEAN

TO [REDACTED] - here is the draft
of [REDACTED] article on air power &
spoke to [REDACTED] about. R U interested
a [REDACTED] ORE stuff.

Caribbean international relationships may be stabilized by forthcoming aircraft deliveries that will assure the Dominican Republic air supremacy over its Caribbean and Central American neighbors. Aware of the importance of air power, the "democracies", will appreciate the difficulties in the way of successful filibustering expeditions against the "dictatorships" absolute air superiority.

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The significance of air power in Central American-Caribbean international relationships was demonstrated by recent events in Costa Rica. The ability of the Figueres forces to obtain control of three commercial air transports by means of which they received materiel from friends in Guatemala was an important factor in placing Figueres in control of the present government.

Balance of power alignments in the area which place Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, Guatemala and now Costa Rica in opposition to Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Honduras (with El Salvador maintaining a difficult neutrality between the two groups) have further increased the importance of air power. Both sides have demonstrated a willingness to supply materiel to

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their respective friends, and such materiel as has been exchanged has either been (1) aircraft or (2) munitions and weapons transported to the recipient in government controlled or owned aircraft. For example, last summer the Cuban army seized weapons from the participants in the ill-fated invasion attempt against the Dominican Republic. Some of this materiel was later shipped to Guatemala in Guatemalan army planes, and from there it was transshipped to Costa Rica on commercial planes seized by the Figueres revolutionary forces. Despite the denials of President Trujillo, the evidence is substantial that his air force has transferred at least one fighter plane to Nicaragua where Somoza is under threat of attack by the "Caribbean brigade".

Clearly, therefore, air power is of importance in assessing the relative strength of rival blocs of power in the Caribbean, and the ability of individual governments to withstand revolutionary incursions from without. Furthermore, assays of relative strength must include commercial aircraft available to the Caribbean governments in the event of emergency. On the basis of present estimates, the strongest air power in the Caribbean-Central American area is Cuba, followed by the Dominican Republic, Venezuela,

* Present and potential airlift of Venezuela is more than twice that of any other Caribbean Republic.

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Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, El Salvador and Costa Rica in that order. At the present time, however, Cuba's superiority over the Dominican Republic is very slight, and, if one considers air strength from the standpoint of bloc rivalries the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Honduras in combination are equal (if not slightly superior) to Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, Haiti and Costa Rica in combination. From the standpoint of Central America alone, the Nicaraguan airforce enjoys superiority over that of any of its potentially hostile neighbors and cannot be seriously threatened by that of Costa Rica and Guatemala in combination. Of perhaps even greater significance is the fact that the Dominican Republic is reported to be receiving within two or three weeks five Mosquitoes and ten Beaufighters from Great Britain. These planes, if they arrive, in combination with six P-51's now on order from the US (their export has been approved by the competent US authorities) will give the Dominican Republic absolute air superiority over the other Caribbean and Central American republics and no existing combination of powers or potential combination of power will, in the near future, be able to match it.

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Since it is unlikely that the Caribbean countries will, in the foreseeable future, engage in open warfare against one another, it is estimated that superiority of air strength of the so-called dictatorships will be used primarily as a device for protection against filibustering expeditions organized outside of their own territories and directed against them. It will also be used to assure the delivery of arms and materiel from one ^{friendly power} dictatorship to another in the event of a revolutionary attack on any one of them. In certain cases it is to be expected that planes themselves will be loaned to use against potential or actual revolutionaries, as has already been the case with the P-38s which Trujillo has loaned or sold to Gomez.

If the Dominican Republic actually succeeds in establishing the air superiority that now seems inevitable on the basis of forthcoming deliveries, international relationships in the area should become more stabilized. It is estimated that the democracies will come to realize the hopelessness of their situation from the standpoint of undertaking or supporting filibustering expeditions of the Cayo Confites type and revolutionary activity will perforce revert to the traditional barrack room conspiracies. The

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length of tenure of the present dictatorships in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Honduras and the bitterness which they have engendered, however, will probably enhance the degree of violence, bloodshed and assassination which will accompany such traditional internal conspiracies.

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